

T³: Trustee Training Tips

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GOOD-BYE AND GOOD LUCK

Even good things must come to an end and the pressures of shrinking budgets, shrinking time, and more cost-effective on-line formats have signaled the demise of *T3: Trustee Training Tips* with this issue. This publication debuted with the Spring 2000 issue and it has been a delightful nine years of providing Kentucky's public library trustees with useful information as they discharged their duties. We hope we have assisted you in understanding your duties and responsibilities and helped you carry them out in an efficient and effective manner.

It seems appropriate to end with a short summary of advice:

- **Apply the Goldilocks Principle.** This means demand enough information to make good decisions, but don't let yourselves be overburdened with too much. It should be "just right." This applies so well to financial reports. You must know the status of your revenue, but perhaps even more importantly, how the funds are being spent. You are liable for your library's actions or inactions.
- **Keep it Simple.** This means understandable. An excellent area to apply this advice is in policy writing. Staff and public need to know what you're actually saying, so make it plain and direct enough that they will. Meeting room policy, for example, should not read like a long government document.
- **Be Wise; Be Legal.** Every board has excellent non-legal assistance at hand with KDLA—either through their regional staff or from Frankfort—for many issues, such as the correct procedure for executive sessions or setting tax rates. For issues that require legal advice, consult an attorney and consider legal specialties even if it costs a bit more. An example would be hiring a personnel lawyer to review your personnel policies or assist you in terminating a director.
- **The Board is the Boss.** Never forget that you, the board as a body, meeting in open session, with a quorum present, are the ultimate "boss" of the library. This does not mean you interfere with the management you have delegated to your one employee, the director, but it does mean the buck stops on your collective desks. You are liable, both as a board and individually, so exercise your authority appropriately and always know everything you need to know about decisions upon which you vote. And, speaking of voting, do not allow yourself to be swept along with the majority; vote how *you* really feel.

It's been great sharing ideas with you over the years and we wish you the best library possible. Thank you for all you do for your community by serving on the library board.

HIRING A NEW DIRECTOR

Much as many would like to disavow all knowledge of it, the baby boomers are starting to retire—and in larger and larger numbers each year. This means many library boards are going to find themselves searching for a new director in the next few years. If this information is not timely now, it will be, so you might wish to save this issue for later reference.

Of all the tasks a board is called upon to perform, selecting a new director is the single most important one. It takes precedence over a building project or a tax petition. Your director sets the tone for the library in your community and, from our experience, boards are reluctant to terminate for mediocre performance, and so the library limps along, a shadow of what it could be with the right person in charge.

So, how do you go about making this all-important decision and go about it without violating the law? Here are the basic steps:

1. Contact your regional consultant for advice and assistance throughout the process. Keep him/her updated as decisions are made.
2. Find out the minimum certification level set by the state for a director in your county. This is determined by population, but remember, it is a *minimum*; as a board you can set the bar higher, but not lower.
3. Determine the start date for the new director and work backward to establish a timeline for the process. Expect to take at least 3 months and that's with everything smoothly falling into place without any delays. It may take as long as 6 months if your choice is currently employed and must give a month's notice to that employer.

4. Construct the job ad and post it on KDLA's free Job Hotline as well as other national library job banks. Some of these are free postings; others involve a fee. In today's library job market, the internet is the source for information and it may be a waste of money to pay for expensive ads in statewide newspapers. The ad itself should include:

- Minimum education/experience required
- Salary range
- Deadline for receiving resumes
- Contact person / address
- Residency requirement, if applicable

Allow the ad to be active for about 6 weeks. The salary range is important to weed out those expecting far more than you are willing to pay. It is unfair to them and wastes your valuable time—and possible money if considerable travel is involved for interviews.

Be aware that a residency requirement may limit your choices, especially if your county is a commutable distance from an urban area.

Select the contact person and address to which the resumes are to be mailed. This should not be the library, can be your regional consultant's office, or can be a trustee's address. The receiving person must be willing to make copies for each trustee, 3-hole punch them, and mail them as received. This gives everyone a chance to review every resume carefully. A 3-ring binder dedicated to this purpose is an excellent way to keep them organized.

Approximately 2 weeks from the deadline, place an ad in the local paper for good community relations. You may wish to remove the salary from this one.

5. Write or update the job description. This is essential for ascertaining compliance with ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) later on. This is a legal federal requirement and must not be ignored. Your regional consultant can assist you.
6. Call a special board meeting to review the resumes once all have been received, unless your deadline dovetails with the regular monthly meeting and there is time to do so then. This will be done in executive session as allowed by KRS 61.810(1)(f). Determine which candidates you wish to interview and decide whether or not the library will pay travel expenses for them.
7. Schedule the interviews. There are pros and cons for doing them all in one day (if you have 5 or fewer). Most interviews will take approximately an hour, and while it makes for a full day, you do bring a level playing field to the process. Expect to hold them no sooner than 10 days to 2 weeks from this meeting.
8. While it could have been done earlier in the process, now is the last opportunity you have to determine what specific competencies you wish in your new director. This should be discussed by the entire board and a consensus reached on which are most important ones. Again, your regional consultant can help you.
9. Determine your interview questions. *It is of utmost importance that you ask all candidates the same questions and that you do not ask any questions you are legally prohibited from asking.* Your contact person can prepare a set of the questions for each trustee to use during the interview for note taking. Please use these; you will not remember which person said what by day's end.
10. Determine your interview process. Will one person ask all the questions or will each person ask a few? Who will be re-

sponsible for getting the room reserved and set up for a comfortable process? (Don't forget to have water on hand for your interviewees as well.) Who will answer questions asked by the candidates? Do you know your benefits package?

11. Take a few minutes after each candidate to gauge reaction. Is this a yes, no, or maybe? The first interview may be the most difficult to determine since you will not have any comparisons yet, but try to rate him/her anyway. This is not in stone and you can change your mind.
12. What will be the process after interviews are completed? Who will send rejection letters in a timely manner? Who will make the job offer? Ideally this will be the board president or secretary. [Note: you cannot ask your regional consultant to do this part, as the job offer or rejection must come from a trustee.] It is prudent for the whole board to determine the limits for negotiation, so the designated trustee can proceed without having to call multiple meetings.

Good luck and happy hunting!

T³:Trustee Training Tips is published quarterly by the Field Services Division of the Kentucky Department for Libraries and Archives. Correspondence should be addressed to the editor, Nelda Moore, at Lincoln Trail Regional Office, 201 Cathedral Manor, Suite One, Bardstown 40004-1250. Phone 502.348.8181; Fax 502.348.8182; email: nelda.moore@ky.gov.

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LIBRARY LETTERS

Dear Marian Librarian,

We really want to hire one of the individuals we interviewed, but she can't start until 3 months after our current director retires? What do we do in the meantime?

-- Troubled Trustee

Dear Troubled,

It is better to wait for the right person, even if that means going director-less for a little while. After all, your library functions when your current director goes on vacation, doesn't it? Or when he's sick? The only difference is this is a bit longer.

If you have an Assistant Director, that person is already designated to be in charge; if not, you can appoint an Interim Director until the new person can start. Just be careful you don't change a lot of policy during the interim. Your new director will have her own ideas to promote.

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WHERE ELSE?

Now that *T3: Trustee Training Tips* will no longer be sent to board members, it's time to find new options for useful information about being a trustee in Kentucky.

- *Libraries & Archives Monthly* is a new online newsletter with a standing column for trustees. Subscribe by sending an email to Paige.Sexton@ky.gov and requesting this free e-publication.
- Ask your regional consultant or director about books or journal articles of interest to trustees. There are lots.
- Subscribe to the daily *Kentucky Library News Digest*, an annotated list of newspaper articles about library events and issues throughout the commonwealth, by sending an email to Jimmie.Epling@ky.gov. Links are provided to the full articles.

